

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----121345 071517Z /45

P 081343Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0955
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BUCHAREST 5503

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: CI, US
SUBJECT: U.S.-CHILEAN RELATIONS AND THE LETELIER CASE

1. SUMMARY. CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO ROMANIA CARLOS VALENZUELA HAS JUST RETURNED FROM TWO MONTH'S CONSULTATIONS IN SANTIAGO WHERE HE ATTENDED CABINET MEETING ON LETELIER CASE AND ACCEPTED ASSIGNMENT OF BEING GOC REPRESENTATIVE TO DEAL WITH US ON CONTRERAS EXTRADITION REQUEST. VALENZUELA TOLD US THAT PINOCHET HAD DECIDED TO HONOR U.S. EXTRADITION REQUEST WHEN RECEIVED. END SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND. CARLOS VALENZUELA MONTENEGRO IS PROBABLY CHILE'S SENIOR CAREER DIPLOMAT, AND HE IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW CIVILIANS TO HAVE HELD RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS UNDER BOTH ALLENDE AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. FOR MUCH OF ALLENDE PERIOD HE WAS AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO; HE RETURNED TO SANTIAGO SHORTLY BEFORE SEPT. 11, 1973 COUP, AND HE BECAME DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY (NUMBER THREE POSITION) AFTER COUP. IN 1974 HE WAS DISMISSED FROM THIS JOB AT SPECIFIC INSISTENCE OF CHILEAN AIR FORCE (FACH) COMMANDER AND JUNTA MEMBER GENERAL LEIGH. VALENZUELA CLAIMS DISMISSAL WAS NOT FOR REASON GIVEN AT TIME OF NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR A FACH REPRESENTATIVE (COL. JAIME LAVIN, OF FACH TRIAL AND
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DINA NOTORIETY) BUT BECUASE LEIGH BELIEVED VALENZUELA'S LOYALTY TO THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WAS LESS THAN ABSOLUTE. PINOCHET, HE CLAIMS, DEPLORED LEIGH'S ACTION BUT WAS UNWILLING TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF IT SO AS NOT TO WEAKEN THE "GRANITIC" UNITY OF ARMED FORCES AT WHAT ALL AGREED WAS A CRUCIAL TIME. INSTEAD, PINOCHET ASSIGNED HIM FIRST AS AMBASSADOR TO GATT IN GENEVA AND THEN TO BUCHAREST IN MAY

1976. IN ADDITION TO SPANISH, HE SPEAKS EXCELLENT FRENCH AND GOOD ENGLISH BUT PRACTICALLY NO ROMANIAN.

3. VALENZUELA IS AN OLD-TIME RADICAL WHO STILL HAD INTIMATE PERSONAL AND FAMILY TIES TO SUCH PAST MOVERS AND SHAKERS AS FORMER PRESIDENT GONZALEZ VIDELA AND THE ENRIQUEZ CLAN. HE ALSO SERVED UNDER FORMER PRESIDENTS ALESSANDRI AND FREI AND HAS CLOSE RELATIONS WITH BOTH. IN THE FINEST RADICAL TRADITION, HE SEES HIS FIRST LOYALTY TO BE TO THE CHILEAN NATIONAL INTEREST, AND HE IS NOT AFRAID TO SPEAK HIS MIND, INCLUDING TO CURRENT MILITARY LEADERS INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY. A WIDOWER, HE IS INTENSELY UNHAPPY AND LONELY IN BUCHAREST, WHICH HE CORRECTLY REGARDS AS POLITICAL EXILE. HE ALSO SUFFERS FROM DIABETES AND HAS PROBLEMS WITH HIS RIGHT EYE. BY COINCIDENCE, THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR HERE (TIPTON) SERVED IN CHILE 1972-76 AND IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW PEOPLE IN ROMANIA WITH WHOM VALENZUELA WILL TALK. A REASONABLY CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS IN WHICH THE POLISHED AND HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL VALENZUELA HAS TALKED ABOUT THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF CHILEAN POLITICS AND THE MILITARY REGIME IN QUITE CANDID TERMS. HE DID SO RECENTLY, AFTER RETURNING FROM TWO MONTHS' CONSULTATION IN SANTIAGO, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON U.S.-CHILEAN RELATIONS AND HIS UPCOMING ROLE THEREIN.

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4. U.S.-CHILEAN RELATIONS AND THE LETELIER CASE

VALENZUELA ATTENDED A FULL-DRESS CABINET MEETING AT WHICH AMBASSADOR TO U.S. JOSE BANUEL BARROS MADE DETAILED PRESENTATION OF STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF LETELIER CASE, CONCLUDING WITH A FLAT RECOMMENDATION FOR COMPLETE GOC COOPERATION INCLUDING EXTRADITION OF CONTRERAS SEPULVEDA. ALL CIVILIAN MEMBERS AGREED AND WARMLY CONGRATULATED BARROS FOR HIS PRESENTATION, AS DID PINOCHET AND PRO-PINOCHET MILITARY OFFICERS INCLUDING THEN MIN HEALTH GENERAL MATTEI. SOME MILITARY OFFICERS, ESPECIALLY FROM ARMY, DEMURRED, HOWEVER. (NOTE: THIS CABINET SESSION ALSO HEARD REPORTS ON BOLIVIA

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S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 2 BUCHAREST 5503

EXDIS

SITUATION AND ON ARGENTINA/BEAGLE CHANNEL, THE LATTER
PRESENTED DR. ARREGO OF U. CHILE).

5. IN SUBSEQUENT PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH VALENZUELA, PINOCHET
STATED THAT HE WAS WILLING TO PURSUE LETELIER CASE "TO
THE ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES" SINCE CONTRERAS HAD LIED TO
HIM ABOUT DINA INVOLVEMENT ON SEVEN OCCASIONS, THREE PRI-
VATELY AND FOUR PUBLICALLY. PINOCHET FLATLY DENIED TO
VALENZUELA ALL PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF DINA PARTICIPATION IN LETELIER
MURDER BUT ADDED THAT U.S. EVIDENCE HAD CONVINCED HIM SUCH
PARTICIPATION HAD OCCURRED. CONSEQUENTLY, PINOCHET SAID,
HE HAD THE UNENVIABLE CHOICE OF APPEARING AS EITHER AN
ACCOMPLICE TO MURDER OR A FOOL (HUEVON). SINCE HE FEELS
HIMSELF INNOCENT OF BUILT KNOWLEDGE, HE IS WILLING TO
HAVE CONTRERAS ET AL EXTRADITED, AND LET THE CHIPS FALL
WHERE THEY MAY. PINOCHET STRESSED THE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE
NATURE OF THE CASE, ITS CURCIAL IMPORTANCE TO U.S.-CHILEAN
RELATIONS, AND THE NEED FOR A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT OF
UNQUESTIONED INTEGRITY TO DEAL WITH USG ON IT. HE THEN
ASKED VALENZUELA TO TAKE THE ASSIGNMENT, WHICH HE ACCEPTED.
CONSEQUENTLY , VALENZUEAL WILL LEAVE HERE FOR SANTIAGO ONCE
HIS FAREWELL CALLS ARE MADE AND EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1 WILL
BECOME SPECIAL ADVISOR (ASESOR) TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER
WITH A MANDATE TO HANDLE THE U.S. EXTRADITION REQUEST.

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6. VALENZUELA IS BOTH EXCITED AND PLEASED WITH ASSIGNMENT,
WHICH HE REGARDS AS CAPSTONE TO A LONG CAREER OF PUBLIC
SERVICE. PRIOR TO DISCLOSURE OF HIS FUTURE DUTIES, HE COM-
MENTED THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY VAKY IS OFTEN REFERRED TO
IN SANTIAGO (NOT CLEAR BY WHOM) AS AND "ENEMY OF CHILE"
AND ASKED POLITICAL COUNSELOR FOR AN ASSESSMENT. VALENZUELA
WAS CLEARLY RELIEVED WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR'S REPLY

THAT HE HAD KNOWN VAKY WELL FOR OVER TEN YEARS, INCLUDING SERVICE TOGETHER AT A PREVIOUS POST, AND HAD ALWAYS FOUND HIM TO BE TOALLY PROFESSIONAL AND EXTREMELY COMPETENT, SO THAT "ENEMY OF CHILE" LABLE IS REFLECTION ONLY OF THE STUPIDITY OF THOSE USING IT.

7. COMMENT: POLITICAL COUNSELOR WILL BE SEEING VALENZUELA AGAIN BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR CHILE AND COULD USE OCCASION TO MAKE ANY POINTS DEPARTMENT/EMBASSY SANTIAGO BELIVE ARE APPROPRIATE.
AGGREY

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